

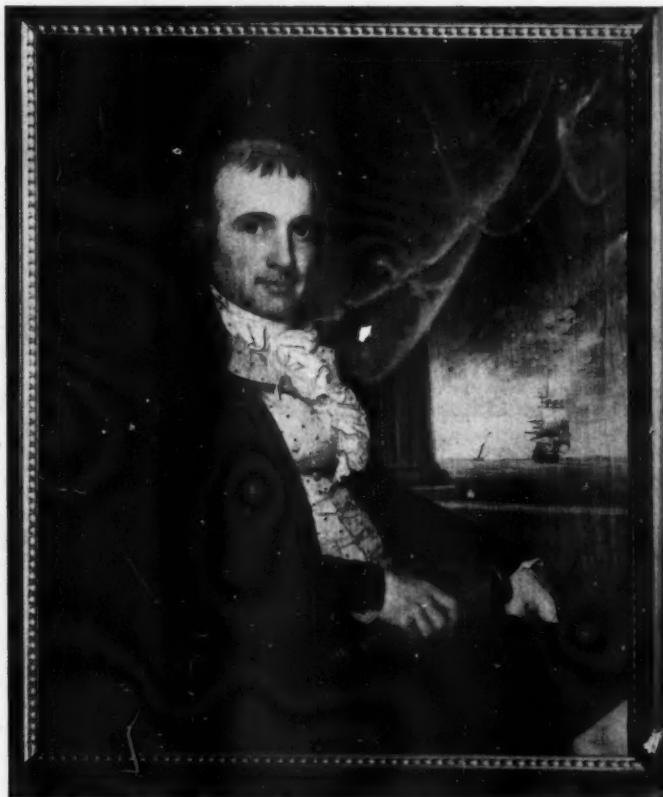
# RHODE ISLAND HISTORY

PUBLISHED BY RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

VOL. I

JANUARY 1942

NO. I



CAPT. SAMUEL PACKARD

(See page 20)

*Courtesy of the Museum of Art, R. I. School of Design*

ISSUED QUARTERLY AT PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND

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*The Society assumes no responsibility for the  
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## John Brown House Accepted by the Society for its Home

By GEORGE L. MINER

At a special meeting, on December 9, 1941, the members of the Society voted unanimously to accept Mr. John Nicholas Brown's generous offer of the John Brown House, 52 Power Street, for the home of the Society; and to sell the Cabinet and land on Waterman Street to Brown University.

The unanimous sentiment of the meeting was voiced by Col. H. Anthony Dyer, a past President, when he said: "In these confused times, no better lesson can be offered to modern society than the presentation of a real old Providence house which has stood for those New England loyalties that have made us what we are."

\* \* \* \*

For the information of present and future members, the steps preliminary to this important action should appear upon the record.

Last June, when Mr. Brown told the officers of the Society that he would like to give the John Brown House property, Judge Stearns appointed a fact-finding committee consisting of Messrs. Charles B. Mackinney, George L. Miner, and William G. Roelker, Librarian, to make a thor-



DETAIL OF DOORWAY AND BUSTS, SOUTHEAST PARLOR,  
JOHN BROWN HOUSE, 52 POWER ST., PROVIDENCE, R. I.

*Courtesy of Historic American Building Survey*

ough study of the adaptability of the house to the Society's purposes, and of the financial feasibility of the project.

The committee reported that the John Brown House is soundly built and has been well kept up. Two architects, Messrs. John Hutchins Cady and Philip D. Creer, examined the property and reported that it was in sound condition and good repair.

Your committee also obtained opinions from experts in the field of historical society management, which were not only favorable but enthusiastic.

Mr. Clarence S. Brigham, Director, The American Antiquarian Society, former Librarian of the Rhode Island Historical Society and a native of Providence, wrote in June:

"Ever since I looked over the John Brown House about a fortnight ago and considered the possibility of its being used for the Rhode Island Historical Society I have grown more and more enthusiastic over the idea. The house itself is one of the most famous historical buildings in New England, undoubtedly the finest early house in Rhode Island, and perhaps even in New England. It is peculiarly adapted to the needs of a historical society because of its numerous large rooms, with opportunity to shelve special collections separately and because of its unusual vault facilities in the basement. I know of no other historic mansion in New England so well adapted to the preservation of books, papers and especially museum material. The house really is a historic museum in itself.

Its location is admirable, with spacious grounds and fine parking facilities, . . ."

Mr. Alexander J. Wall, Director, The New York Historical Society wrote as follows:

Historical societies everywhere should awaken the people to their heritage of American democracy. They have the records but have made far too little use of the data they preserve. To do this and introduce to the people of the State the great usefulness of your Society the Brown House offers splendid facilities. The lovely grounds ideally suited to the social functions germane to historical society activities would attract as could nothing else, in bringing together people who will be glad to help in the expanding programs which are possible. The acceptance of the Brown House would be a long step forward in bringing to life a pleasant but sleepy Society which I have known for forty years.

In respect to the financial feasibility, your committee reported on the following points: As an accepted educational institution with an annual appropriation from the State, the Society is exempt from all taxes—local, State and Federal; the care of the grounds — including clearing sidewalks and spraying trees — is about \$550 per year, which will be borne by Mr. Brown for three years, at no cost to the Society; a reserve of \$1,000 per year for repairs to the building would appear to be ample; heating costs can only be estimated, but the increase over the cost at Waterman Street should not exceed \$900 per year. Thus, the additional expenses connected with taking over the Brown House will total about \$2500 per year.

In addition, your committee found it necessary to recommend adding to the staff an assistant librarian, whose salary with certain other necessary expenses will total \$2500 per year. It is necessary to incur this expense whether the Society removes to the John Brown House or remains in the old Cabinet.

In future, therefore, it will be necessary to increase the income of the Society by approximately \$5000 per year.

Your committee is of the opinion that the continuing support of a willing community on an annual basis is the soundest way to maintain a vigorous and useful institution.

The John Brown House in itself is of great historical importance and will, it is believed, attract a greatly increased membership to the Society. But until the income from annual dues catches up to the increased expenses, your committee recommends the collection of a sustaining fund in sufficient amount to cover the extra expenses for a period of four or five years.

At the time this is written 79 members and friends have contributed \$9380 for this purpose.

In addition, Miss Rosa Anne Grosvenor has offered to give the Society \$1000 to start a fund to maintain the Brown House with the hope that her example will inspire others to make current gifts or testamentary provisions for this purpose.

# The City Seal of The City of Providence

by BRADFORD FULLER SWAN\*

## *Introduction*

In January (1941) when the city government of Providence was organizing under the new charter, an ordinance was introduced by Councilman Hugh B. Donley, (Dem.) Ward 3, establishing a city seal and seals for various city departments and officials.<sup>1</sup>

When the ordinance came up for discussion at the City Council meeting on April 17, it aroused a flurry of light banter, and the good-humored controversy continued in the Providence press the day following.<sup>2</sup>

The cause of this controversy was that the ordinance, for what appears to be the first time in the city's history, specified what number of men should be shown with Roger Williams in the canoe which is part of the depiction on the seal of the well-known What Cheer episode at Slate Rock.

The ordinance, as printed in the *City Council Journal of Proceedings*,<sup>3</sup> states that there should be "three White Men" in the canoe.<sup>4</sup> Councilman Frederick S. Barnes, (Dem.) Ward 7, moved to amend the ordinance to make

\* Bradford Fuller Swan A.B. (Yale) 1930, on the staff of the *Providence Journal* and for many years interested in historical research.

<sup>1</sup> The writer is informed by Joseph E. Maguire, now a member of the Board of Canvassers, that he drew the ordinance when he was City Clerk the preceding year, and that Mr. Donley introduced it at his request.

<sup>2</sup> *Providence Journal*, April 18, 1941, *Evening Bulletin*, April 18, 1941.

<sup>3</sup> *City Council Journal of Proceedings* (hereafter cited as *Proceedings*) No. 1, pp. 10-11.

<sup>4</sup> Mr. Maguire informs the writer that he made the number four in his final draft of the ordinance, but that the ordinance committee, considering it, took an early, rough draft for submission to the city printer. The amendment was made in committee later.

the number of men in the canoe four, and this amendment was incorporated in the ordinance when it was finally passed on May 1, 1941.<sup>5</sup>

Thus for the first time in its corporate existence, dating back to 1832, the City of Providence has a seal described in detail by ordinance. By doing this it has settled one of two historical questions connected with the city seal. In specifying four men in the canoe, the city has returned to the number which appeared on the earliest seal the writer has been able to discover.

It has thus brought order out of the remarkably chaotic condition in which the city seal has remained ever since it was first created.

The changes which have occurred in the seal during these years constitute one phase of this inquiry. Another question goes deeper; it is concerned with the fundamental historical basis for choosing any definite number and saying that that is the number of men who were in Roger Williams's canoe when it approached Slate Rock. The latter of these questions will be discussed first.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### *How Many in the Canoe?*

The whole What Cheer episode may well be apocryphal. Williams never mentioned it in any of his extensive writings which have been preserved and are known to historians. Neither, so far as we know, did any of his contemporaries ever write about it. For an episode which has become such a widely-known part of Rhode Island's history there is remarkably little evidence to shed any light on it. The late Howard M. Chapin, with all his researches, found only one bit of evidence which could be said to have any traceable connection with the episode.

Nevertheless, the frequent and early mention of What

<sup>5</sup> *Proceedings*, No. 10, p. 126.

Cheer Field in the town records<sup>6</sup> would seem to indicate that there is some historic basis for the name of that place, and that most likely it was some such incident as that depicted on the city seal.

Furthermore, Williams reserved What Cheer Field for himself when he disposed of the Providence purchase to his co-settlers.<sup>7</sup> This may have signified he had some special attachment for it.

The evidence Mr. Chapin reported, in his *Documentary History of Rhode Island*, is the Angell family tradition, to the effect that only Thomas Angell, then a boy, and Roger Williams were in the canoe when it approached Slate Rock where the White Men were greeted by the natives. This is based on an affidavit by Theodore Foster, who said he received his information from the aged Stephen Hopkins, a brother-in-law of Brig. Gen. James Angell. Foster's affidavit states specifically that "no other persons except the said Thomas Angell being then in company with him [Williams] . . . ."<sup>8</sup> The presumption is that they were on a scouting trip.

It is interesting to note here that the seal of the Angell Family Association adheres to this tradition.<sup>9</sup>

The second branch of this problem seems to stem entirely from an article by Moses Brown. Chapin says that the venerable historian, writing anonymously in the *Rhode-Island Register* for 1823 and in the *Providence Directory* for 1828, gives the story of What Cheer as tied up with the general migration of the first settlers from Seekonk to

<sup>6</sup> The term appears in the town records as early as 1641. Howard M. Chapin, *Documentary History of Rhode Island* (Providence, 1916) I, 19. It is applied to land near Slate Rock now marked by a monument at Williams, Power, Gano and Roger streets.

<sup>7</sup> *Early Records Town of Providence* (hereafter E. R. T. P.), III, 111.

<sup>8</sup> The affidavit, with references as to its source, is given in full in Chapin, *op. cit.*, I, 17-19.

<sup>9</sup> The seal of the Providence Medical Association also shows only two men in the canoe.

Providence.<sup>10</sup> This tradition, if it may be called that, of the What Cheer greeting being given to the party moving over from Seekonk, opens wide the field for involved historical mathematics.

To determine the number of men in the canoe — on this basis — all we have to do is determine how many men came to Providence with Williams. It would seem to be a simple problem, but it is not. Historians have differed widely on it, and even the sources would seem to show discrepancies. Besides, as will be shown, a time element is involved; when the party left Seekonk is of vital importance in gauging the size of the group.

Williams himself once wrote a phrase that has been interpreted to mean that there were five in the party. In his plea to the commissioners for the United Colonies, on the 17th of the 9th month (November) 1677, he wrote:

"... Yet out of Pity, I gave leave to W. Harris, then poor and destitute, to come along in my Company, I consented to John Smith, Miller, at Dorchester (banished also) to go with me, and at John Smith's desire, to a poor young fellow, Francis Wicks, as also to a lad of Richard Watermans. These are all I remember . . . "<sup>11</sup> The "lad of Richard Waterman's" is generally conceded to have been Thomas Angell.

Joshua Verin, centre of the town's first test case on religious liberty, (he was disenfranchised in 1638 for restraining his wife from attending religious services at Williams's house) apparently gives six as the figure. He writes:

"... som of you Cannot but Remember tht we six which Cam first . . . "<sup>12</sup>

We have thus the choice of five or six men in the canoe — provided we are to accept these statements without an

<sup>10</sup> Chapin, *op. cit.*, I, 19-20.

<sup>11</sup> Harris Papers, R. I. H. S., II, 237; *R. I. Historical Tract No. XIV*, 53-54.

<sup>12</sup> Verin to the Town of Providence, Nov. 21, 1650, Providence Town Paper 042; *E. R. T. P.*, XV, 37.

attempt to determine whether they actually refer to the first entry into the Providence settlement\* — and historians and biographers of Williams have varied considerably in their choice.

Samuel Greene Arnold in his *History of the State of Rhode Island* says five, on the basis of Williams's 1677 letter.<sup>13</sup> William R. Staples in *Annals of Providence* says six, and attributes it to Verin's letter.<sup>14</sup> Dr. Clarence S. Brigham, who wrote the pertinent section of Field's *State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations At the End of the Century: A History*, says six.<sup>15</sup> Prof. James D. Knowles in his *Memoir of Roger Williams* says Williams and five others were in the canoe.<sup>16</sup> Prof. Romeo Elton in his *Life of Roger Williams* gives the number as six.<sup>17</sup> Job Durfee in his imaginative epic poem *Whatcheer* (as printed in his collected works) postulates an Indian guide, Waban, as Williams's only companion on the canoe trip to What Cheer Field.<sup>18</sup> Emily Easton in *Roger Williams: Prophet and Pioneer* has seven men in the canoe.<sup>19</sup> S. H. Brockunier, Williams's most recent biographer, acting with what may be proper caution, makes no mention of the episode. Oscar S.

\* Because it seems best to discuss these statements in detail after more data has been presented, the writer has postponed the discussion to footnote No. 29.

<sup>13</sup> Samuel G. Arnold, *History of the State of Rhode Island* (New York, 1859), I, 40.

<sup>14</sup> William R. Staples, *Annals of Providence* (Providence, 1843), 21.

<sup>15</sup> Edward Field, *State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations At the End of the Century: A History* (Boston, 1902), I, 24 and footnote.

<sup>16</sup> James D. Knowles, *Memoir of Roger Williams* (Boston, 1834), 102. Prof. Knowles states in a footnote that he took his information from the Moses Brown article. Chapin, incidentally, errs in quoting Knowles as saying five. (*op. cit.*, I, 22.)

<sup>17</sup> Romeo Elton, *Life of Roger Williams* (Providence, 1853), 37.

<sup>18</sup> Job Durfee, "Whatcheer," *Works* (Providence, 1849), 1-178, at 143-145.

<sup>19</sup> Emily Easton, *Roger Williams: Prophet and Pioneer* (Boston, 1930) 178. She evidently duplicates Angell and the "lad of Waterman's".

Straus in *Roger Williams: The Pioneer of Religious Liberty* gives the number as five, following Arnold.<sup>20</sup>

These citations are given not with the aim of determining the weight of the evidence, nor in an attempt to make a comprehensive survey of the opinions of historians, but rather merely to show how historical pronouncement on this single episode has varied.

A time element in this problem was mentioned above. The exodus from Seekonk was caused by receipt of a letter from Governor Winslow of Plymouth Colony.<sup>21</sup> Inasmuch as Winslow did not take office until March, 1635/36, the exodus must have been after that date.<sup>22</sup> It also must have been before July 26, 1636, because a letter from Williams, at Providence, was received in Boston by that date.<sup>23</sup> This would place the date of the migration between March and July 26, 1636.<sup>24</sup>

Now, Benedict Arnold once wrote:

"... We came to Providence to Dwell the 20th of April, 1636. per me Bennedict Arnold."<sup>25</sup>

Therefore, if there were only five or six men in the party coming from Seekonk to Providence, the migration must have occurred before April 20, 1636. But Benedict's father, William Arnold, stated in 1659 that "for as much that I was one that the very first day entred with some others upon the land of providence . . ."<sup>26</sup>

Williams, furthermore, wrote that the removal from Seekonk cost a harvest, indicating that it was after planting time when they moved.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Oscar S. Straus, *Roger Williams: The Pioneer of Religious Liberty* (New York, 1894), 75 and footnote.

<sup>21</sup> Williams's Letter to Major Mason, Massachusetts Historical Society Manuscripts, No. 161.

<sup>22</sup> Knowles, *op. cit.*, 103 and footnote.

<sup>23</sup> John Winthrop, *A Journal* (Hartford, 1790), I, 190.

<sup>24</sup> Chipkin discusses this question at length in *Doc. Hist. of R. I.*, I, 20-23. He asserts that the date has never been accurately determined but adds that it probably was in May or June of 1636.

<sup>25</sup> *New England Historical & Genealogical Register*, III, 428.

<sup>26</sup> Providence Town Paper 0103; *E. R. T. P.*, XV, 77.

<sup>27</sup> Williams's Letter to Major Mason, cited *supra*.

So it would seem that Benedict Arnold, who was writing years after the event, used the term Providence loosely and really referred to the first unnamed settlement at Seekonk.<sup>28</sup>

If this theoretical picture will stand up under scrutiny — and it is the same picture which Chapin drew of the Seekonk settlement, making this writer feel that it cannot be far wrong — we must add a minimum of eight more persons to the migration party, making a total of 14-plus in all.<sup>29</sup>

Here it would be well to recall that the sole source of the legend that the What Cheer episode occurred during the colony migration, rather than during a scouting trip on

<sup>28</sup> Chapin comes to this conclusion after a thorough discussion in *Doc. Hist. of R. I. I.*, *passim*.

<sup>29</sup> The Arnold family at Seekonk, according to Chapin, (*op. cit.*, I, 12) included William Arnold, his wife and children, one of whom was Benedict; William Arnold's son-in-law, William Carpenter, with his wife and a son, Joseph; and Thomas and Frances Hopkins, children of William Arnold's sister.

It is interesting to note that if we select from this group at Seekonk the adult heads of the households — Roger Williams, John Smith, miller; William Harris, William Arnold, William Carpenter, and Joshua Verin — we get six who may be the "we six which came first" referred to by Verin. On the other hand, Verin's letter is concerned with grants of home lots and meadows. He writes: ". . . som of you Cannot but Remember tht we six which Cam first should have the first Convenienc as it was put in practis first by our whom [home] lots & 2 li by the medowe in wenasketucket River & then those that were admited by us into the purchase to have the next which were about 7 . . ."

Verin was disenfranchised on 21 die of y<sup>e</sup> 3 mon<sup>y</sup>. (*E. R. T. P.*, I, 4.) The entry immediately following this is dated the 10th of the 4th month, and states:

"M<sup>d</sup>. y<sup>e</sup> Severall portions of grasse & medow w<sup>ch</sup> our neighbour Greene o<sup>r</sup> neighbour Cole neighbour Arnold & nr Weston Layd out in y<sup>e</sup> Townes name vnto o<sup>r</sup> neighbour James neighbour Olney neighbour Waterman neighbour Cole neighbour Weston neighbour Carpenter, neighbor Holymen were Confirmed as their proper Right & Inheritance to them & theirs as fully as the former portions appropriated to o<sup>r</sup> neighbour Throckmorton neighbour Greene neighbour Harris Joshua Verin neighbour Arnold and neighbour Williams were or are confirmed to them & theirs."

Note that here land is confirmed to seven persons in the same force

which Williams and Angell went alone, is Moses Brown's apparently unauthenticated and presumably unsupported statement in the article referred to above.

The evidence in support of the Williams-Angell version is obviously traditional, although Foster presented it under oath.

Nevertheless it must receive preference over a wholly unsupported statement.

Therefore, in the light of this examination, the writer is forced to the conclusion that if the city seal is to portray the What Cheer episode it should show a canoe with two occupants rather than a canoe with five or six occupants or several canoes with 14-plus occupants.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### *Changes in the City Seal*

The first ordinance creating a city seal for Providence appears to have been adopted April 9, 1834, and to have been repealed April 6, 1835 "from and after the first Monday in June 1835."<sup>30</sup>

as it had been confirmed to a former group of six — a six which included Williams, Harris, Verin, and Arnold.

Are these two groups the "six which came first" and the seven later admitted to the purchase as Verin states? Inasmuch as Verin is obviously discussing property rights in his letter, rather than mere priority of settlement, some such situation might well explain Verin's reference to six persons "which came first" if there were actually many more in the party that crossed from Seekonk to Providence.

As for Williams's enumeration, it can be interpreted in several ways, one obvious explanation being that these were persons he allowed to join him at Seekonk, and another being that he picked them up on his flight from the Bay. The latter presumption is too radical to be considered without an exhaustive study with which this paper is hardly properly engaged, but the fact remains that Williams's statement in question is not definite; it does not state where or when these four joined him — they may have come to him at Providence itself for all that can be discovered from the phrasing — and thus the statement can be allowed no more strength than Verin's in a discussion of how many persons came from Seekonk to Providence on the migration.

Section 1 of this ordinance says:

"..... within which circle, a device referring to the landing of the first settlers in Providence, — representing a point of land on the bank of a river, covered with forest trees, beneath which a group of savages are awaiting the approach of a canoe containing Roger Williams and his companions: above which device, and immediately within the inner circle aforesaid, the words 'What Cheer?'"

The writer has discovered no seals based on this ordinance, and whether such seal ever was made or used probably cannot be determined until the old records at City Hall are brought into some semblance of order.

Practically the same ordinance — the only changes are in punctuation — was passed by the City Council in 1845.<sup>31</sup> The seal is printed on the title page of the *Charter and Ordinances of the City of Providence. 1845.*, and appears again on the verso of the title page.<sup>32</sup> That the ordinance was passed before July 14, 1845 is shown by the fact that the seal was impressed on a certificate of Joseph S. Pitman's selection as one of the judges of the Police Court in Providence, bearing that date and signed by Albert Pabodie, City Clerk.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Page 98 of *The Charter and Ordinances of the City of Providence with the acts of the General Assembly Relating to the City* (Providence 1835). There is a copy in a bound volume of old Providence ordinances in the possession of the Society.

<sup>31</sup> On what date this ordinance was passed the writer has not been able to discover. Minutes of the Board of Alderman make no reference to it. The writer is informed by the present City Clerk, W. Earl Dodd, that other minutes are in a vault in the City Hall cellar, and by Mr. Maguire that these papers were badly water-soaked during the flood and hurricane of 1938.

<sup>32</sup> *Charter and Ordinances of the City of Providence. 1845.* (Providence, 1845), 75, for the ordinance as passed. This copy is bound in the same volume as the 1835 ordinances mentioned above.

<sup>33</sup> In the Collections of the Rhode Island Historical Society. It is in a box labelled *Providence Seals*.

Both the printed device on the copy of the ordinances of 1845 and the impressed seal on the Judge Pitman certificate show the same scene. The canoe, containing four tiny figures, is in the deep distance, rounding a bend in the river while a group of Indians waits on the shore in the left foreground. (figure 1)<sup>34</sup>

This same printed seal appears, without the inscription rim, on the City Auditor's first report, for 1848, and thereafter for six years on the annual reports of this municipal department.<sup>35</sup> This is Type B.

On the auditor's report for 1854, the seal was changed by the restoration of the outer circle forming a rim within which FOUNDED 1636. is printed at the top and CITY INCORPORATED 1832. at the bottom. The centre device of this seal, that is to say the view, is unchanged.

On the half-year report for 1855 — the eighth report — the seal is Type B again; in the other 1855 report — the ninth report — the seal is Type A.

On the 12th report, in 1858, a new seal — Type C — is used. (figure 2) The view is, in general, the same as the earlier one, but the etching is superior, especially of the trees, and the river is

<sup>34</sup> For purposes of identification the writer has termed this seal Type A.

<sup>35</sup> The writer has decided, for the purposes of this discussion, to use the City Auditor's reports as a criterion of the changes in the printed seal. Although the official seal may not have changed as often as these printed seals, the printed examples are those that come most often to public attention and are thus responsible for the unsettled opinion as to just what the seal should portray. The Providence Journal Company has a complete file of these reports, and, through its courtesy, its copies have been used for the illustrations.



FIGURE 1



FIGURE 2

calm. The canoe is also nearer the Indians. The question mark has been dropped from WHAT CHEER, and that phrase has been placed within a white cut-out. The outer rim is double-lined inside and out, and the outermost line is heavier than the rest. The inscription, all in double-line type is FOUNDED 1636. (at top) CITY INCORPORATED 1832 (at bottom). This is certainly one of the best looking seals in the whole series.

Another seal, entirely different, appears on the 15th report of the City Auditor in 1861. Here the whole conception of the scene changes and the canoe, instead of being some distance up the river, is shown with its bow almost touching the shore. (figure 3) (The canoe remains close to shore in all seals hereafter.) It will be noted that the seal here is two inches in diameter, with the centre device 1 $\frac{1}{16}$  inches across. The canoe carries six men. The rim bearing the inscription is triple-lined outside and double-lined inside.

The inscription is CITY OF PROVIDENCE. (at top) and FOUNDED 1636. INCORPORATED 1832. (at bottom). The centre device, well etched, is inscribed WHAT CHEER in small letters on a curve at the top. This seal remained in use for only three years.

In 1864, on the 18th report, this Type D seal gave way to Type E, which is smaller in di-



FIGURE 3



FIGURE 4

ameter ( $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches overall and  $1\frac{1}{8}$  inches across the device) with only double lines bounding the rim and with only three men in the canoe. (figure 4) The inscriptions are the same as Type D, except for the size of the lettering, the addition of two dots separating the top and bottom phrases, and use of slightly fatter letters for WHAT CHEER.

Three years later, on the 21st report, for 1867, the Type F seal appeared. Not only is this a change to four men in the canoe but there is a radical change in the placement of the lettering. The seal is  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches overall and the thin double-line rim bears no legend. CITY OF PROVIDENCE is curved across the top of the device, with WHAT CHEER on a straight line below it. At the bottom, in this descending order, are FOUNDED (straight across) 1636 (straight across) and INCORPORATED 1832 (curved). Williams, the standing figure in the bow of the canoe, appears to be shaking hands with the leader of the Indians, but in the next following type of seal, which is similar, it can be seen that what is going on is the extending of an olive branch by the Indian. This next type of seal, Type G, is apparently a negative impression of Type F, with the same scene but with dark background and light figures and lettering. This seal appeared on the City Auditor's 26th report, for 1872, and remained in use for 10 years.

In 1884, on the 38th report, seal Type H appears. This is similar to the two immediately preceding it, the same in size and in general placement of the inscription. The principal difference is the addition of the question mark after WHAT CHEER and the insertion of this phrase within quotation marks in a white cut-out plate in the customary position.

The three seals which have been used since 1884 are all re-drawings of previous seals. Type I is a re-drawing of Type H. It was used from 1886 to 1912, when Type J was first used; again in 1913 through 1915; again in 1918, and in 1922.

Type J is re-drawn from Types F and G, but more freely handled. The lettering is in the same locations but it is black instead of open. The right background, the costumes, and the attitudes especially are handled more freely than in the earlier versions of this seal. Type J was used on the auditor's reports in 1912, 1916-17, 1919-21, 1924, and 1926.

Type K, re-drawn as a sort of wood-cut negative from Type I, is, aesthetically, probably the worst of the numerous city seals. It was used on auditor's reports for 1923, 1925, and 1927 through 1938.

The last two auditor's reports, for 1939 and 1940, bear no seal.

Meanwhile, although all these recent printed seals show four men in the canoe, the seal used for impressions on commissions and certificates as recently as January, 1941, shows only three men.<sup>36</sup>

This chaotic condition should be ended with the seal now described in detail by ordinance, but this may not prove to be the case. The ordinance was passed on May 1, 1941; as of this date, July 27, 1941, no seal has been cut or drawn according to its specifications for official use by the city of Providence.

It is to be hoped, however, that after seeing 11 different seals changed 23 times in 97 years, the city will settle down at last.

<sup>36</sup> An interesting example of this is shown specifically on Mr. Maguire's certificate of election to the Board of Canvassers. The impressed seal at the bottom of the document shows three men in the canoe; the printed seal at the top shows four men in the canoe!

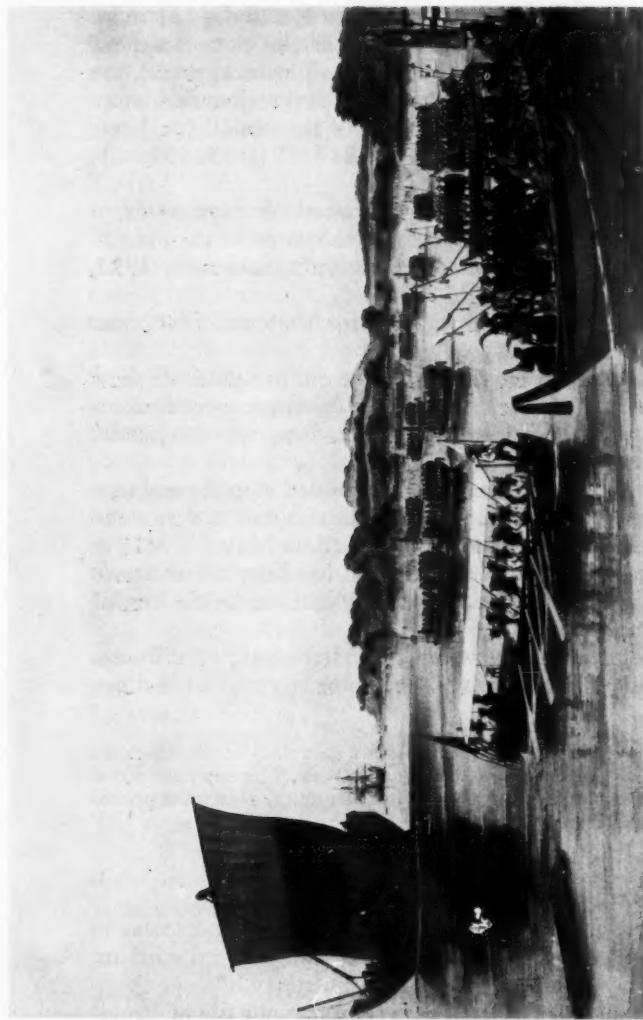
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### Directories Wanted

The collection of directories of Rhode Island towns in the Rhode Island Historical Society lacks several editions, particularly numbers in the 1920's and 1930's.

We should like especially to complete our file of Providence directories in which we lack the years 1938-1941.

PASSING THE RUBICON  
LIEUT. S. BENT IN THE "MISSISSIPPI'S" FIRST CUTTER FORCING HIS WAY THROUGH A FLEET OF JAPANESE  
BOATS. FIRST OF A SERIES OF FIVE LITHOGRAPHS, DEPICTING COMMODORE MATTHEW CALBRAITH PERRY'S  
EXPEDITION TO JAPAN, 1853-54, BY HEINE AND DROWN, ARTISTS OF THE EXPEDITION. (*From the George L.  
Shepley Collection, Rhode Island Historical Society*)



## Commodore Perry Opens Japan

Matthew Calbraith Perry was born in Rhode Island in 1794. His family is a famous one in the annals of the navy, he and his brothers having followed in their father's footsteps. While the career of Matthew Perry was less spectacular than that of his famous brother, Oliver Hazard, his services were certainly as great. He served in the War of 1812, and the Mexican War, fought pirates and slave-traders on the African coast and in the West Indies and opened Japan to Western trade. This last exploit contributed the most to his fame.

Japan had been closed to the Western world since 1638 when the Portuguese were expelled. Only Holland had succeeded in maintaining trade relations, but even her traders were allowed entry in only one port, Nagasaki, where they were treated almost like prisoners. All other attempts to enter Japan, including three American expeditions earlier in the 19th century, had ended in dismal failure.

Perry set out for Japan in 1852, with only four ships (two of which were steamers) and little hope of success. It was his courage, patience and understanding of the Japanese that saved the day. Adopting the ceremonial of the Japanese, he made it known that he was a very high officer of the United States government and that he would present President Fillmore's letter only to a special emissary of the Emperor. No one else could catch even a glimpse of him. The Japanese finally acceded to Perry's demands and received him with great ceremony, July 14, 1853, at Gori-hama.

The following year, returning with a larger squadron, he was able to arrange the first treaty between Japan and a Western nation.

An exhibition of pictures and objects relating to Perry and the Japanese expedition is now on display at the R. I. Historical Society. It includes a facsimile of the treaty mentioned and a series of prints, some of which are reproduced in this issue.

A. V. H.

## A Rhode Islander Goes West to Indiana (1817-1818)

*Communicated by GEORGE A. WHITE, JR.<sup>1</sup>*

In the Fall of 1817, John Congdon Packard, 24-year-old son of Captain Samuel Packard, and John Jenckes, son of Colonel Joseph Jenckes,<sup>2</sup> left their fathers' farms in North Kingstown to go west in search of fortune. After three months of travelling by horse, in wagons, and down the Ohio by boat, they arrived at last at Fort Harrison,<sup>3</sup> Indiana, about a year after that State had been admitted to the Union.

In the course of his journey and during his first year in Indiana, John Congdon Packard wrote home frequently. His letters present a fine view of certain aspects of Indiana frontier life in 1818, and reveal conditions in sharp contrast to the comfortable existence that was the lot in those days,

<sup>1</sup> Mr. White, of Providence and East Greenwich, is a patent attorney, a member of the firm of Armington & White. The editing of the material has been done by Hope F. Kane, Ph.D. (Brown) 1930, and Bradford F. Swan, A.B. (Yale) 1930. In the letters, the writer often failed to use periods to end sentences. These have been supplied wherever it was thought proper, and the first letter of the following word capitalized. Brackets have been omitted in such instances, to make for easier reading; elsewhere they have been used to enclose inserted punctuation marks as well as phrases.

<sup>2</sup> Colonel Joseph Jenckes (1764-1818) was the son of John Jencks and Freelove Crawford. He was born in Providence on February 11, 1764, and died at Fort Harrison Prairie, Vigo County, Ind., on September 13, 1818. In 1788 he married Mary Bowers, daughter of Jerothmial Bowers of Somerset, Mass. They had John, born May 23, 1790, and Daniel, both of whom appear later in the letters. Joseph Jenckes' father owned a house and land at the northeasterly corner of Benefit and Jencks streets. John Jencks had built the house. Joseph Jenckes' father also had a 330-acre farm at Boston Neck, which his father, Daniel Jencks, had bought of Benjamin Hazard in 1750.

<sup>3</sup> An early frontier post about three miles up the Wabash River from Terre Haute, it was abandoned as a military post about 1822. It is not to be confused with the present Fort Benjamin Harrison near Indianapolis.

of a Providence ship-owner who had retired to a South County farm.

By way of introduction to these letters, and to provide the background against which John Congdon Packard's new life is to be contrasted, a brief outline of his father's career is offered here.

Captain Samuel Packard was the son of Nathanael Packard and was born in Providence, October 17, 1760. His father owned land bordering on North Main, Howland, and Try Streets. Captain Samuel Packard's life followed a familiar pattern of the times; it was, in fact, very similar to his father's career. He was successively a mariner, ship master, ship-owner, and merchant.

He owned 39 ships, sailing from Providence to all ports of the world. Among these ships were the sloops *Sally* and *General Greene*, the schooners *James*, *Enterprise*, and *Flying Fish*, and the brigantines *Betsey*, *Eliza*, *Louisa*, and *Dolphin*.

An ardent admirer of General Washington, whose acquaintance he had made when Washington visited Providence, Captain Packard acted for him in certain secret work and, upon his return from abroad in the winter of 1796, he brought some "fine stuffs" for Madam Washington and presented them to her personally at Philadelphia.

On November 13, 1797, Captain Packard bought at auction, for \$5725, the property on the north side of Westminster street, formerly owned by John and Thomas Young, which is now part of the Industrial Trust Company site. With the property, which fronted 36 feet on Westminster street, ran northerly to the channel in the Cove, bounded on the east with Samuel Butler's property and on the west with Benjamin Eddy's, went rights in Rawson's Fountain, the popular water supply system of that day.

Here Captain Packard and his family lived in a mansion of wood and brick, measuring 25 feet on the street and 60 feet deep. It was three stories high, with a porch 12 feet square.

On December 13, 1789, Captain Packard had married Abigail Congdon (born April 26, 1761), daughter of John Congdon of North Kingstown and fourth in descent from Benjamin Congdon who had come from the West of England and settled in Portsmouth, R. I., before June 16, 1670. Benjamin Congdon bought a large tract at Pettaquamscutt on September 22, 1671. He is reputed to have had many slaves, kept 100 cows, and made six large cheeses a day.

Benjamin, son of Benjamin and Elizabeth (Albro) Congdon, married Frances Stafford and had John Congdon who married Patience Northup. John and Patience were the parents of John, father of Abigail. This John Congdon, born February 28, 1736, married Abigail Rose.

In 1798, Abigail (Congdon) Packard inherited a portion of the Congdon homestead farm on Boston Neck from her father, and it was on this land that Captain Packard built a house where the family lived more and more as time went on. In the early 1800's Captain Packard purchased the remainder of the original farm from the other heirs and obtained additional tracts of adjacent property so that eventually the farm comprised more than 500 acres. It extended from Packard's Rocks on Narragansett Bay to the Fish Pond at the head of Narrow River, and was bounded on the south by the Daniel Coggeshall (now Casey) Farm. Captain Packard also owned land in Cranston, R. I., and in Illinois.

Captain Packard furnished his Providence and North Kingstown homes with fine furniture, china, and silver, many pieces of which are still preserved. His quadrant and spy-glass are in the South County Museum. In the Museum of the Rhode Island School of Design are his furniture, silver, and his portrait, attributed to James Earle (see front cover), and the mirrors from his Westminster street house. The mirrors still show the water mark caused by the flood during the Great Gale of September 23, 1815. Other possessions, including many of

his papers among which these letters were found, are in the possession of his heirs.

The writer of these letters, John Congdon Packard, was born in Providence on October 15, 1794, the third child of Captain Samuel and Abigail (Congdon) Packard. He died at Fort Harrison, Indiana, on August 27, 1828, and, in 1829 his heirs sold his Indiana lands.<sup>4</sup>

\* \* \* \*

Pittsburgh November 11th  
1817

Dear Father

We arrived here yesterday about noon being three weeks from home. The roads in a dreadful condition from Chambersburgh. The South Mountain before you get to Chambersburgh is Turnpiked and Coal mountain afterwards but the rest of the way you can have no idea of unless you can imagine three times as many stones as there ever were on Mr. Gardiners<sup>5</sup> pasture on hills as steep as Maxparrons [MacSparran's]<sup>6</sup> for three or four miles & all the rest of the way a bead of morter up to the hubbs of the wheels with holes in many places from three to ten or twelve feet where the rain has washed them[,] then you may have a

<sup>4</sup> The land was sold in two lots. According to a list of title records in H. C. Bradby's *History of Vigo County, Indiana* (1891), p. 223, on May 27, 1829, Abigail, Eliza, [and] Abby Packard, William G. and Susanna C. Brown [Susan Caroline (Packard) Bowen, wife of William Gorton Bowen of Coventry] sold to William Latta the N½ of the SE¼ and the N½ of the SW¼ of Sec. 2, Town 11, Range 9. On December 17, 1829, Abigail, Eliza, and Abby Packard, William G. Bowen and Susana C. Bowen sold to William C. Linton the S [North?] ½ of Sec. 2, and S½ of SW¼ of Sec. 2, and S½ of SE¼ of Sec. 2, Town 11, Range 9. (*Op. cit.*, p. 231.)

<sup>5</sup> Probably an especially rocky pasture on the farm of Sylvester Gardiner south of South Ferry in Boston Neck.

<sup>6</sup> MacSparran Hill is the third elevation from the south end of the long ridge lying along the west side of the Pettaquamscutt River. It is the rise immediately north of Tower Hill proper, and derives its name from the famous Anglican divine, Rev. Dr. James MacSparran.

very faint idea of Sideling and Laurell hills the one being 7 and the other 10 miles over the soft part. [The same description] will apply all the way into Greensburgh 30 miles from here and occationly afterwards. Where we came off the Turnpike[,] which was being repaired being very much cut up[,] we took what is called the Summer-sett road being advised so to do for the other was almost impassable.

The roads full of emigrants[,] I suppose they would average a famely a mile. Some of them appear to have spent all and are begging on the road. Passed waggons stalled broak down and abandoned and now and then a dead horse. We met with no exident but the loss of the Bear skin, upset three or four times[,] broak the tongue of the waggon and three whiffletrees which I think quite moderate to what some have met with. Could not get more than 19 miles per day over the mountains from sun rise till it set.

The houses from Lancaster [Pa.] generaly very mean Log houses and like wise a great many in that and the other towns through which we passed. To give you some ideas of the traveling here one man who kept a tavern amongst the mountains informed us that he has gave out fourteen thousand bushels of oats in a year[,] which I do not doubt from what I seen.

The second night after we left home we stopt at NLondon where we met with Lieut Saunders who is stationed there and arived at NYork on Sunday afternoon. Saw Mr. Corlis<sup>7</sup> there whome I suppose you have seen ere this.

<sup>7</sup> John Corlis (1767-1839), a prominent Providence merchant before he moved his family to Kentucky in 1815. He died in Paris, Ky. June 29, 1839. (See *Providence Journal*, July 13, 1839.) His father lived at South Main and Planet streets, in a house which John Corlis sold to Isaac Bowen, Jr., in 1815. Corlis married Susan Condy Russell on February 25, 1790, and in 1812 he built the house now known as the Carrington House. He sold the house the year he built it to the first Edward Carrington who came from New Haven. Corlis was on the building committee of St. John's Church in 1810. Evidently he was on

Mr. Jacobs<sup>8</sup> was kind enough to endorse those checks with [for] me which not being done by you they would not accept [accept] without. Stopt one night in NYork & one in Phila. Called at the horspital to see George Mc Clellan but could not hear of him. Then called on Mr Webster who keeps a list of the students and the place they board at but could not find his [McClellan's] name.

The smoak is so thick in this place [Pittsburgh] that it seems to be covered in fog and the air so impregnated with sulphur from the coal that it is very disagreeable.

My horse has stood the journey remarkably well. He is in as good order as when he started for all a distance of 566 miles.

We here put our trunks and waggon on board of a boat for Louisville the roads through Ohio being so muddy and being heartily tired of traveling that way I mean in the waggon.

I have bought a very good new saddle here for 10 dollars which is as cheap as could be. Got to chamberburgh to[o] late to get them there as the merchants that came down wanted them to go back with.

We shall leave here tomorrow on horseback.

Ever your affectionate and dutiful son

J C Packard

[To] Cap<sup>t</sup> Sam<sup>1</sup> Packard  
North Kingstown  
RIsland

[Endorsed in another hand] March 20

his way from Bourbon County, Ky., whither he had moved his family, to visit in Providence when John Congdon Packard met him in New York. (The Corlis family appears later in the letters.)

<sup>8</sup> Evidently Henry Jacobs, merchant, listed in the New York City directory for 1815 at 53 Greenwich street. The directories for 1816 through 1818 list him as "commercial merchant" at 147 Pearl street, with his home at 117 Pearl street. In 1819 he was listed as a commission merchant at Broome street, corner of Mulberry. Thereafter his name does not appear in the New York directories. One Henry Jacobs was residing in Providence in 1808; possibly they are the same person, which

Bourbon [County, Ky.]<sup>o</sup> Nov 30th 1817

Dear Father

We arrived here on the 23 and shall leave here on the morrow for Indiana. John Corlis<sup>10</sup> goes with us. We found the roads very bad. Was not much pleased with Ohio the country through which we came being very hilly and the soil poor excepting about Scioto where it is as fine as can be possible for land to be.

I called this morning on Mr. Hickman<sup>11</sup> to enquire about his Plantation. He is a very old man and is confined to his room and has been so for some time. He has a fine place of about three hundred acres or upwards about one hundred of which is clear with a good log house a log barn and a number of cabbins and a very fine orchard. A stream of water runs in front of the house about two hundred yards off. He did not know how much stock it would keep—not having kept much as he has been confined so long—but said it would a great deal (his expression). He did not think he would part with it now. He says he has been offered 25 dollars pr Acre and thought then he would sell but gave it up. The place will be sold at his death as it is more than he can give to one of his children haveing a number.

I think I should prefer a place nearer town for there is no society about here. Mr. Corlis's famely I believe are sick of this country though they do not say much about it. They are much pleased with Lexington and would like to be nearer. Joseph<sup>12</sup> stays there and at Mrs. Braken-

would explain the connection between the Jacobs and Packard families which appears in the course of the letters.

<sup>o</sup> Bourbon County, Ky., was created from part of the vast territory of Fayette County, Ky., by the State of Virginia, which then held the territory, in 1785.

<sup>10</sup> Son of the John Corlis mentioned in footnote 7, he was born in Providence on March 5, 1797.

<sup>11</sup> David Hickman, who died before 1818. He had 300 acres on Coopers Run in Bourbon County.

<sup>12</sup> Joseph Corlis, brother of John and son of John and Susan Condy (Russell) Corlis; born at Providence on November 5, 1792.

ridges allmost all his time. He is Josey still. I was much pleased with the country about Lexington and the town itself. They are building a very neat Colliage<sup>13</sup> there.

Wheat is selling here for 62 1/2 cents corn 33 1/3 cts and salt at 2 dollars pr bushell. There is a company that have engaged the salt at all the works for a number of years which has caused the rise.

There is a great difficulty about land as there is so many old claims to one piece and they are continually hunting them up. There is one that takes about 20 or 30 acres of Mr. Corlis's farm.

My horse is in fine order still but has the scratches very bad which makes him quite lame with one foot. He is now much better haveing run out in the pasture days ever since he has been here.

There is no news of any importance. The people are emmigrating from here to the Missouri and Alabama in considerable numbers.

There was a steamboat the other day bound down the river that struck a sawyer (as they call it[,] a tree that has got fast in the river) in the night and sunk immediately. Four of the passengers—of which there were a number—were drowned. The rest got into a skiff and got onto an island that was uninhabited with out there clothes as they were asleep when the boat struck. They stayed there all day and at night a boat that was coming down the river

<sup>13</sup> Transylvania College. According to *History of Lexington, Ky.*, by G. W. Ranck (Cincinnati, 1872), it was the "first regular institution of learning founded in the mighty West." It was founded at Lexington in 1788, with Rev. James Moore as the first president. In 1798 it merged with Kentucky Academy. In 1817 a "handsome college building" was erected on the lawn in front of the earlier building. Dr. James Blythe was president at this time. On December 19, 1818, Dr. Horace Holley came from Massachusetts to be the third president. Dr. Alva Woods (1794-1887), who was president ad interim of Brown University in 1826-27, was president of Transylvania in 1828-31. In January, 1865, the trustees conveyed the property to Kentucky University on the condition that that institution would move to Lexington, and it has been Kentucky University ever since. Probably its best known graduate was Jefferson Davis.

took them down to a place where they could procure clothes. One of them wrote from Natchez to his father in Lexington saying that place [Natchez] continues very sickly that there is not more than an hundred white famelys in town and 4 or 5 die in a day.

With the greatest esteem I remain your dutiful Son  
P S. I wish you to write, and direct to Vincennes. JCP  
Dear Elisa [John's sister]

I dined yesterday with Mr. Bradford<sup>14</sup> in Lexington. He is a very fine man and Mary Ann<sup>15</sup> is handsomely situated. They live in handsome style and intend visiting Providence in the spring. She is not quite so handsome as formerly. Miss Spears I have not seen. She is represented as very tall round shoulders and homly. Elisa Johnson is quite pretty[ ; ] she is about the size of Lucy Reynolds and at times makes me think of her. I wish you to write to me all the news as I am very anxious to hear from home.

My best love to mother and all the rest of the famely and all enquiring friends.

<sup>14</sup> Charles Bradford, who married Mary Ann Corlis, daughter of John and Susan Condy (Russell) Corlis, on September 10, 1817. He was a corporal in Hart's Company, which was one of six units of volunteers raised in and about Lexington, Ky., at the outbreak of the War of 1812, and was wounded in the Battle of Frenchtown (now Monroe) on the Raisin River in Michigan, but escaped the Raisin Massacre. He died 1822 (?). His father was John Bradford, one of Lexington's most important citizens in the settlement's early days. John Bradford was chairman of the trustees of Lexington in 1792. He was a printer, and founded the *Kentucke Gazette* (1787), the first newspaper published west of the Alleghanies. In 1788 he published the *Kentucke Almanac*, the first pamphlet printed west of the mountains. He printed books as early as 1794, and was the first State Printer. He was chairman of the trustees of Transylvania College. He fought in the Revolution and against the Indians at Chillicotte. Born in Fauquier County, Va., in 1749, he married Eliza, daughter of Capt. Benjamin James, in 1761, and settled in Lexington in 1785.

<sup>15</sup> Mary Ann (Corlis) Bradford (1794-1861) was born in Providence on December 3, 1794. Charles and Mary Ann Bradford had William Russell Bradford on May 29, 1818. She died in 1861.

Ever Your Affectionate [torn]  
I wrote Father from JCPackard  
Pittsburgh which I suppose he received  
[To] Capt Saml Packard [Endorsed] answered March 20  
North Kingstown  
R Island

\* \* \* \*

Fort Harrison [Indiana] January 16th 1818

Dear Father

I arrived here on the fourth ins. after being detained in Greenville a small town about 16 miles from Louisville (in this state) [i.e., Greenville, Indiana] 22 days on account of my Horse who has the scratches so bad that he could not travil his legs being swoln and cracked to his knees. (Jenckes and Corlis came on[,] it being at that time uncertain how long I should be detained). He is however in as good order as when I started the journey having not taken off his flesh.

The price of land has enhanced here much more than I expected as the price is now about six dollars cash pr [acre for a] quarter section the cheapest. There was one quarter sold for 5 dollars cash about a month ago which is the lowest of any that has been sold for some time. There is a number of quarters for sail but the price they ask is 10 dollars. There are some quarters belonging to nonresidents and some of them very fine[,] one of which belongs to Mr Paul of St Clairsville [Ohio] to whome I intend writing to know his terms if he should wish to sell. His being purchased at the sail. [Government sale] perhaps may be bought on better terms. The good land in this state is pretty much entered which by the way there is not a great deal of except on the Wabash where it is the finest I ever saw.

You can have no Idea of the country unless you should see it and the improvements within the 2 years past for at that time there was not a house within 20 miles of the Fort and now there is at least two hundred, on Honey creek prairie you can see at least 20[,] and one quarter section sold there for 15 dollars pr Acre. At Terre Haute there was not a tree cut and now there are upwards of 20 houses and in the course of the next season there will be a great many more.

We attended a ball there last evening where there were about 40 persons. We were very agreeably disappointed for we enjoyed ourselves very much which we did not expect but having had two invitations before[,] which we did not accept[,] thought it our duty to go now. The company was very respectable and every thing carried on in order. The musick was very good being furnished by Major Chun [?] of the Fort.

Fort Harrison prairie is about 12 miles in length and about five in breadth the land not on a dead levil but rolling enough for fine situations for houses. The soil on one of the noles [knoles] (where Jenckes is agoing to set his house and where we dug to day for an ice house) I found to be 2 feet and six inches [thick] but in the bottom land I suppose it to be twice that thickness of a strong black loam. Jenckes has made his fortune in this speculation for his property would sell at any time for thirty thousand dollars he having some of the choicest prairie and wood convenient and last evening he was told that on one of his quarters about 5 miles from town there was a fine mill set [site] which in this country is a fortune of itself.

John [Jenckes] is very anxious for his father to come out and I wish yould come with him for I think such a country as this is worth seeing. Esq Brown the Gentleman with whome we board says he has known 56 bushels of corn being taken from the acre with nothing more being done to it than dropping the corn in the furrow and turning the next upon it. This he knows to be a fact as the corne was measured.

Jenckes and myself went across the river on the 9th with an intention of going to see the grand prairie in the Illinois but did not get out more than 7 miles by night when we encamped. In the night it began to snow and continued so to do untill morning when we made our tracks back again where we arived about sunsett pretty much fatigued.

The weather has been very bad and a number of very cold days and the snow the deepest that has been seen which was about 3 inches [feet?].

I shall make all enquirys. about land that I can and perhapse there may be some found that can be bought cheeper than what I have mentioned and I wish you to write me soon what is best to do. For the present I shall go with Jenckes when he goes to *House Keeping* which will be about a month.

I wrote you from Lexington in which I requested you to direct to Vincennes but now I wish you to direct here as there is a mail that runs weekly [illegible] Fort Harrison by way of Vincennes.

My expenses up to this time are \$153.73cts including what I have bought.

With the greatest respect I remain your dutifull son

JCPackard

Remember me particular to Mother and the rest of the famely and tell them they must write me all the news. I shal write as soon as anything particular occurs.

[To] Capt Saml Packard [Endorsed] Answered March 20

North Kngstown

Rhode Island

(*To be continued in the next issue*)

## Book Review

### GENERAL WASHINGTON'S CORRESPONDENCE CONCERNING THE SOCIETY OF THE CINCINNATI

Edited by Lieutenant-Colonel Edgar Erskine Hume, President of the Society of the Cincinnati in the State of Virginia. Baltimore: the Johns Hopkins Press, 1941. xliii + 472 pp., followed by a Bibliography of Colonel Hume's publications about the Society of Cincinnati.

This valuable publication by the well-known historian of the Cincinnati includes numerous letters to General Washington preserved in the Society's archives, and never before printed. These documents show, for one thing, the favorable response of the French officers to the Society, in contrast to the suspicion and downright hostility with which it was received by the American public. A large part of the correspondence consists in applications for admission from French officers, including many who were not directly engaged in the American war, but were stationed in the West Indies during hostilities. Even the officers who accompanied La Pérouse in his memorable voyage of exploration wished to receive the coveted Eagle. Washington, as is already known, was much disturbed by the unpopularity of the Society in America. He did his best by correspondence to obtain a "full and respectable" representation of delegates to the first General Meeting at Philadelphia in 1784, and when elected President General used his influence to have the hereditary features of the Society abolished. The General Meeting met his wishes, but as several of the State Societies refused to ratify the change in the constitution, membership by descent remained in force; and it is probable that the Society of the Cincinnati is the oldest hereditary order in existence today. Many curious and interesting documents are included in this book; among them, the application of an American officer for membership on the ground that it would help him to get out of jail; a letter from Tom Paine enclosing a song he had written for the Cincinnati, unfortunately lost; and Washington's careful expense account of his journey to attend the Philadelphia meeting.

For Rhode Island history there are several letters from General Greene and other prominent Rhode Island members, and sundry references to the threatened disfranchisement by the state legislature of any citizen of the State that joined the Society. The book concludes with a 50-page Biographical Supplement respecting the writers of the letters.

The letters of French officers contain much information, some of it doubtless new, on military and naval operations. On page 115 *Larane* is certainly *L'Avane* (Havana); for the writer, Captain Le Gardeur de Tilly, was commander of the French corvette *Washington* which the Comte de Grasse sent to borrow silver from the Governor of Cuba.

S. E. MORISON

## News-Notes

With this issue we have a new title for the quarterly. *Rhode Island History* was chosen because it seemed more descriptive than did *Collections*, which was appropriate when the matter was collected rather than written especially for the publication.

Alice Van Hoesen has been appointed Assistant Librarian. Under her direction an inventory of the Library is being taken, with the help of a grant from the W.P.A.

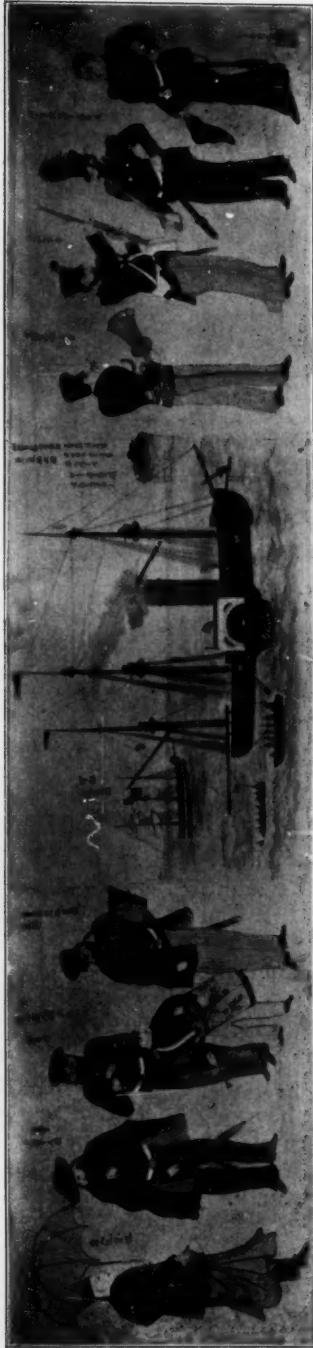
The Society gratefully acknowledges the help of Byron C. Bussey in indexing the *Publications*, which the Society published quarterly from 1893 to 1901.

The Society has had an active and varied lecture and meeting program during the fall season. At two evening meetings, Prof. James B. Hedges of Brown University discussed the wealth of material which lies in the *Brown and Ives Papers*, and Bernhard Knollenberg, librarian of Yale University, spoke on the correspondence of Gen. Nathanael Greene and John Adams. Two Sunday afternoon lectures attracted large audiences: Col. H. Anthony Dyer spoke on "The Romance of the Treasures of the Historical Society," and John Hutchins Cady, A.I.A., gave an illustrated lecture on "How to Identify Old Houses." The afternoon of November 15, the society's members inspected the John Brown House. Two meetings of outside organizations have been held in the cabinet. Henry Hornblower, Jr., of Harvard University, spoke on the excavation of Colonial-contact sites at Plymouth at a meeting of the Narragansett Archaeological Society, for which that society installed an educational exhibit of Indian material in the picture gallery. William G. Roelker, the librarian, spoke before the Colonial Dames on "A Romantic Episode in the Life of Benjamin Franklin."

The Society recently has received a number of genealogies, by exchange, from the American Antiquarian Society. Accessions have been numerous lately and we hope to discuss them more fully in the next issue.

The Society now has 750 members, an increase of 333 since November, 1940.

W. G. R.



JAPANESE DRAWING  
COLORED BY HARUKI  
SHOWING MEMBERS OF  
THE PERRY EXPEDITION  
TO JAPAN.



(See pages 18-19)  
*Now on view at the Rhode  
Island Historical Society.*

THE MESSAGE OF THE  
ADMIRAL OF THE UNITED  
STATES. (Loaned to the  
Rhode Island Historical So-  
ciety by Robert T. Paine, Jr.)

